



WALPOLE
MASSACHUSETTS

Town Administrator's

2023 Annual Budget Message

James A. Johnson – Town Administrator
February 3, 2023



Introduction

In accordance with the Town Charter, I am pleased to present the Town Administrator's Budget Message for Fiscal Year 2024. The \$114.4 million balanced budget that I present today is the culmination of months' worth of hard work and deliberation among Town officials.

The development of the Town's yearly operating budget is one of the most important, challenging, and exciting responsibilities I undertake each year as the Town Administrator. The annual budget serves as Walpole's largest and most significant policy document. The process of developing the budget invites honest conversations about the critical functions we perform, areas of desired improvement or expansion, opportunities to achieve equity, and the role of local government.

The spending plan outlined in this document reflects strong collaboration, thoughtful consideration, and some tough choices, with a goal of best supporting our community in the year ahead. It demonstrates our organization's commitment to top community priorities and shared values. Most of all, it centers the needs of the many people who make Walpole so special.

Central to these values is the fundamental idea that government works to improve quality of life and to create level opportunities for everyone. Here in Walpole we are committed to making the town a more equitable and responsive organization, from our hiring and employment practices, to our budget and policy decisions, down to the services we provide on a daily basis. This past year I am pleased to report department heads participated in the first of many retreats to better recognize and understand implicit bias. Just this past fall the Select Board authorized a Local Initiative Plan, designed to create more affordable housing opportunities for residents downtown. Further, we are currently conducting a classification study of our nonunion, salaried positions, designed to ensure internal equity and fairness and to ensure that equal pay is provided for equal work. Although we still have more work to do, creating opportunities for equity for Walpole's residents is and will continue to be a central focus of this administration.

It is important to note that the financial and budgetary information presented in the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget & Budget Message are projections and are subject to change prior to Town Meeting. I expect that the Select Board, Finance Committee, School Committee and other Town officials will have extensive public discussions regarding the Fiscal Year 2024 budget throughout the next few months during their budget deliberations.



The message I offer you today is one of continued optimism and confidence. The Town's financial management has been strong over the past several years and the outlook for Fiscal Year 2024 continues our investments in quality municipal services and will allow us to continue to grow on our previous successes.

Ongoing Growth in Walpole

Prior to providing an overview of the revenue and expenditures I would like to highlight some of the projects on going in Walpole. Walpole continues to experience growth in both the municipal and private sector.

Municipal Projects

As many residents already know over the last 8+ years the Town has undertaken multiple construction projects that have allowed the Town to address Walpole's aging infrastructure, including the Center Fire Station, Police Station, Council on Aging building, Vehicle Maintenance garage as well as a new Athletic Field Complex and the Town's Streetlights.

In the fall of 2021, Walpole took the necessary steps to address Walpole's school infrastructure needs when residents passed an override vote that has allowed the Town to construct a new Middle School at the site of the current Bird Middle School. Members of the Select Board, School Committee, and School Building Committee have all worked hard over the last year to ensure that the new facility will become a reality. In a time of volatile market prices for public building construction, I am pleased to report that the final bids and contract with our Construction Manager have come in under budget. As of the writing of this budget message, site work and the building foundation are both underway, with the building expected to be completed in time for the school-year beginning in the Fall 2024.



Current Walpole Middle School foundation layout



Town and school officials continue to work toward addressing the facility needs of Walpole High School, which were identified in a Statement of Interest that was submitted to the MSBA back in 2018. Working with the same design team that developed the Middle School project, the Town completed the feasibility phase late last year and entered the schematic design phase for an addition / renovation project earlier this year. At this point, I expect a capital request from the School Committee to be considered at Fall Annual Town Meeting 2023 to complete the project design.

The Master Plan Committee continues to work on updating the Town’s Master Plan. It is anticipated that the updated plan will be completed later this year and once adopted, it will provide town departments and regulatory boards with a blueprint and strategies to guide and implement future growth and development. The Master Plan rewrite will have a long-ranging impact as it guides the Town’s growth over the next twenty years and beyond and as it serves as the first step in the eventual update of the Town’s Zoning Bylaws.

Private Developments

Private Development Projects

There are a number of Major Commercial and Residential projects are expected to begin soon, are ongoing, or are nearing completion. The Building Department and Community Development Department remain busy assisting with development in Town. The Building Department issued 1,577 building permits in 2022, compared to 1,463 in 2019 just before COVID hit. The economy in Walpole continues to be strong.

The following list is a breakdown of some of the major commercial and residential private properties that are taking place in Town:

PENNINGTON CROSSING (FMR WALPOLE WOODWORKERS)

86 1 & 2 bedroom AQV condos
Buildings 1, 2 & 3 are 100%
complete and occupied

Construction on Building 4 is at
90% complete

AGE QUALIFIED VILLAGE (55+) AT RENMAR AVENUE/WEST STREET

105 proposed units approved by the
Planning Board; developer currently
meeting with the Planning Board.
Project has applied to the Planning
Board for modification to their special
permit and site plan approval. Hearings
expected to commence in early 2023.

NORTH WOODS ESTATES IV SUBDIVISION

Subdivision proposes 12 homes.
Currently before Planning Board
for review and approval



Private Developments (cont.)

<p><u>TESLA</u> <u>295 UNION STREET</u></p> <p>Developer seeks to rehabilitate existing commercial site with improved parking, building façade improvements, and site improvements. They have applied for and received all necessary Special Permits from ZBA. Approved building modifications are ongoing and new sewer service has not been installed yet.</p>	<p><u>BURNS AVE</u> <u>COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT</u></p> <p>48 Burns Ave 40B received its comprehensive permit for 32 units. Project was remanded to the ZBA after a denial in February of 2021, remanded in 2022 and denied again. Project is expected to be remanded again in 2023 this time with a proposed modification to 20 single-family dwellings with one point of access off of Brook Lane.</p>	<p><u>SUMMER ST.</u> <u>COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT</u></p> <p>268 Unit 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom 40B project approved by the ZBA in 2021. The site is in the process of preparation for construction which is expected to commence in the spring of 2023.</p>
<p><u>GILMORES 1015 EAST ST.</u> <u>140+ UNIT LOCAL INIT. PROGRAM</u></p> <p>Proposal has been approved by the Select Board and joint application has been filed with DHCD. Town Officials are awaiting outcome of the approval before the application moves to the next stage in the regulatory process.</p>	<p><u>MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT</u> <u>1363 - 1391 MAIN ST.</u></p> <p>Mixed use project is being proposed at the current site of Leo's Pizza. Proposed project would include 18 housing units and ground floor commercial space. ZBA special permit application approved. Building Permit recently approved.</p>	<p><u>BANK OF AMERICA LOCATION</u> <u>979 MAIN ST.</u></p> <p>8 residential units and ground floor retail/restaurant has been approved for a mixed-use building. Project is permitted. Developer is moving forward with the project.</p>
<p><u>DUPEE ST.</u> <u>COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT</u></p> <p>8-unit 40B development, single-family dwellings, on a 53,000 square foot parcel. Project was originally denied by the ZBA and the decision is being appealed. A decision from DHCD's Housing Appeals Committee is expected in 2023</p>	<p><u>931 MAIN STREET</u></p> <p>Application is for a mixed-use project within the downtown that consists of nine (9) one-bedroom units and two (2) units of commercial space. Project was recently approved through Site plan review with the Planning Board.</p>	<p><u>925 MAIN ST.</u></p> <p>A 3-unit commercial building to include an Ice cream store, bagel shop, and hair salon. The unit for the hair salon is open and work is still ongoing for the other two units</p>
<p><u>PINNACLE POINT</u> <u>COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT</u></p> <p>Current project proposals calls for 28 ownership townhouse style units. ZBA declared safe harbor at opening of public hearing which was appealed by the Applicant to DHCD. DHCD sided with applicant. ZBA further appealed to the HAC. Litigation is still ongoing.</p>	<p><u>NEPONSET VILLAGE</u> <u>COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT</u></p> <p>Current project proposals calls for 24 ownership townhouse style units. ZBA declared safe harbor at opening of public hearing which was appealed by the Applicant to DHCD. DHCD sided with applicant. ZBA further appealed to the HAC. Litigation is still ongoing.</p>	<p><u>1337 MAIN STREET</u></p> <p>Rita's Italian Ice and Frozen Custard chain opened a location in Walpole</p>



Private Developments (cont.)

<u>173 HIGH PLAIN STREET</u> 3 story building mixed use residential building with commercial on the 1st floor and a total of eight (8) two-bedroom apartments on 2nd/3rd floors. Application has gone through the regulatory process with both Planning and Zoning Boards.	<u>DRYCRETE CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS</u> Project has been approved through the Planning Board and construction has commenced. The project, which is located just off of Route 1 is expected to be completed in early 2023..	<u>CORNER OF WEST ST. AND SPRING ST.</u> 22 unit Live/Work mixed use residential development. Site Plan Review with Planning Board is complete
<u>EAST WALPOLE CLOCKTOWER</u> Project proposal for 6 townhouse units with commercial space on first floor. Application for a mixed-use Special Permit with the ZBA and Site Plan Review with the Planning Board is still ongoing.	<u>LINCOLN ROAD SUBDIVISION</u> "Lincoln Estates" 24 lot subdivision; project denied by the Planning Board; applicant is in process of appealing to land court	<u>605 ELM STREET</u> Expansion and renovation of Stigmatine Fathers retirement home
<u>SOUTH ST SOLAR OVERLAY DISTRICT</u> Approved by Town Meeting. Site Plan Review through the Planning Board has been completed. Construction is ready to commence.	<u>21 ROUTE 1</u> Modification to the drive-thru and façade of existing Dunkin Donuts	<u>ALEXANDRIA SUBDIVISION</u> Subdivision proposes 6 homes. Project was approved with the Planning Board and is currently under construction
<u>X-GOLF AT WALPOLE MALL</u> Renovation to the space is complete and the business is now open.	<u>PEACH STREET SUBDIVISION</u> Subdivision proposes 5 homes. Project was approved by the Planning Board and is currently under construction	

Financial Foundation

When preparing the proposed operating budget, it was my expectation that the budget would be considered a lean budget by Walpole standards. One of the overarching goals at the start of the budget development process was to attempt to maintain services in Fiscal Year 2024 at the same level as the current Fiscal Year. With the exception of adding an additional Deputy Fire Chief position to address staffing needs we are experiencing at the Fire Department I was able to achieve this goal.



It was also my intention to support the budgetary needs of the Walpole Public Schools. School and Town officials have a proven track record of working cooperatively together and have always found ways to provide the necessary funding for the School District to meet their needs and provide an outstanding education to our students. Based on the meetings School and Town officials have had leading up to the delivery of this message I believe the budget that is being recommended meets these needs.

The proposed Fiscal Year 2024 budget that I present to you this day totals \$114,430,401. This budget does not include proposed override funding, use of reserves or one-time revenues in the balancing process. The budget has been balanced using all available revenues known to us at this time.

Revenue

The primary source of revenue for Walpole is the property tax levy. The total amount anticipated to be raised from the tax levy for Fiscal Year 2024 is \$92,351,656 which utilizes the full limits of Proposition 2 ½ and projects new growth at \$650,000.

In addition to the funds derived from Proposition 2½, local receipts make up just about \$9,538,936 of the FY 24 budget. As one might expect predicting future revenue figures can be a difficult process in normal times however, given the volatile economy we find ourselves in, this year will be especially challenging. Throughout the development of the FY 24 revenue projections the Finance Director and I were mindful of the possibility of the economy slowing down from its frenzied pace over the next year and a half. Some officials at the state level have gone so far to begin to use the phrase “slow-cession” as they have been developing the revenue projections for the upcoming fiscal year where the growth rate of the economy slows down but doesn't collapse. Our revenue projections here in Walpole attempted to balance the Town’s budgetary needs while also being mindful of the comments and findings issued at the state level during the joint Ways & Means Committees annual consensus revenue hearings at the end of last month.

Another contributing factor on the revenue side of the budget is state aid. At this time, we are projecting that Walpole will receive just over \$12 million which makes up just about 10.2% of the overall revenue projection however, Governor Healy is not expected to file her “House 2” General Appropriations Act proposal for Fiscal Year 2024 until March 1st. I have budgeted a modest increase to State aid over what Walpole budgeted for Fiscal Year 2023. The State budget has a long way to go before it becomes law.



Expenses

Each year the Finance team reviews each and every budget request that is submitted and requires department heads to justify each request. The Budget that is being presented for Fiscal Year 2024 includes moderate increases to some of the various departments in Town. The amount requested for appropriation for FY 24 totals \$114.4 million. Areas on the expense side of the budget that I would like to call your attention to include:

Collective Bargaining Agreements:

As we budget for FY24, we have six union contracts on the Town side that are set to expire on June 30, 2023. I expect that over the next few months Town officials will continue to work with the various municipal unions towards settling each of these contracts before they expire. Once they are settled they will be presented to Town Meeting for consideration.

Public Works:

Walpole's Department of Public Works continues to actively manage and perform critical community service operations such as road, sidewalk, athletic field, and common grounds maintenance and snow and ice control. Along with continuing to managing bridge and dam inspections the department is heavily involved in the Complete Streets and other community improvement programs such as way finding and CBD connectivity. Additionally, water, sewer, and storm water management infrastructure of the town at a very high level by the department. The Fiscal Year 2024 budget does not propose any major budgetary changes to the departments that make up the Walpole Public Works. Director Mattson and his skilled team of Superintendents, Department Heads and staff continue to be innovative in the approach they take when it comes to taking on projects in Walpole. Many projects that would typically be contracted out are now performed in house by the staff. Some of these include hazardous tree removal, sewer line installation such as those completed on Washington Street and the South Walpole complex, repair of a drainage culvert on Gould Street, preparation and site work for the newly constructed playgrounds and construction of a walking paths connecting Spring Brook Park to the Municipal Parking lot and the downtown area.

Public Safety:

Walpole's Police and Fire personnel continue to serve on the front lines. I am grateful for their continued professionalism and adaptability. Our Firefighters and Police officers continue to support our community by responding to emergency situations with integrity every day. They have cultivated partnerships with other agencies and strengthened our community's readiness and reliance. The Select Board continues to be focused on providing each department with the staffing and resources to keep our community safe.



The Fire Department continues to see significant increases in total calls for service. This has been due in part to the addition of our full-time fire prevention officer which has allowed us to be more proactive in our fire prevention efforts. This year the Fire Department finished 2022 with 9150 calls for service, of which 4276 were emergency responses. This represents a 14% increase from the previous year in total calls for service and a 47% increase in emergency responses since 2014. The demand for services will continue as the growth of the community continues to expand with larger, multi-story buildings.

The Walpole Fire Department Budget will increase by \$177,000. Last year at this time we had 47 total Firefighters funded as part of the operating budget. I am pleased to report that the Fiscal Year 2024 budget fully funds 47 firefighters and adds a new Deputy Chief position that will oversee Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Training. This new position, which is set to begin on October 1st will help to improve efficiently and operations within the department.

The Walpole Fire Department recently made the necessary arrangements to move forward with ordering two new Fire Engines and an ambulance however supply chain issues continue to plague the manufacturing of our two Fire Engines and an Ambulance. We are hopeful that the Engines will be here in June and the Ambulance should be here by the end of the summer.

The Walpole Police Department remains very busy. Over the last year, more than 21,894 incidents were reported and investigated by the department. A significant trend for the Police Department in 2022 includes over 600 incidents involving emotionally-disturbed persons or persons experiencing some form of mental health crisis. In addition to incidents, public safety dispatchers logged over 7,917 and fielded 6,838 emergency 911 calls.

In the face of new legislative changes Chief Kelleher and the Select Board, continue to focus on community policing, police officer training, social services, and supporting ongoing public safety measures in the community. As part of this initiative, the department has secured a mental health clinician to be embedded with patrol officers and respond to calls for service that involve individuals in crisis. This position will be funded through a grant from the Department of Public Health and the clinician will be dedicated solely to the Walpole Police Department and will work in a full time capacity.



Chief Kelleher and Deputy Kilroy continue work collaboratively the Walpole Police Officers union to ensure that all of the recent police reforms at the state level are implemented and adhered to. Additionally, the Walpole Police Department continues to work hard to build strong relationships and to ensure that they adhere to their mission of being a partner with the community to solve problems and improve public safety in a manner that is fair, impartial, transparent, and consistent. I commend the Police Department for their efforts throughout the certification process. I have been very impressed with the welcoming manner in which the Walpole Police Department have embraced all of the new reforms.

The Walpole Police Department Budget is set to see a modest increase of just over \$64,000. With over 26,000 residents, and 48 current officers, the Walpole Police Department has approximately 1.8 officers per thousand inhabitants. The majority of area communities maintain a range of 1.4 to 2.8 officers per thousand residents.

I commend Chief Bailey, Chief Kelleher and all of the Dispatchers, Police Officers and Firefighters in Walpole for their daily efforts and protection. Walpole is fortunate to have dedicated Public Safety personnel that continue to do an excellent job keeping Walpole safe.

Public Education:

Public education continues to be one of Walpole's top priorities. This year the total public education line is recommended to be \$55,127,010. As I mentioned in last year's Budget Message I am very much mindful of the increasing financial demands that all of the educational budgets have requested for Fiscal Year 2024. Increases in the operating budget, such as those we have faced in recent years in response to the needs of the Educational Budget line, are simply not sustainable within available recurring funds. We must, carefully work with all school officials to evaluate all requests for additional funding in the years to come. This being said, I am pleased to report that the recommended budget for all three education lines will meet the needs of school district.

The Norfolk County Agricultural High School has increased their assessment to Walpole over the last few years for each student that attends the School; as such the budget that is presented includes a 2% increase from Fiscal Year 2023 to Fiscal Year 2024.

Tri-County School officials have advised enrollment continues to rise year over year which is contributing to Walpole's substantial increase to its assessment. As such I have budgeted \$1,700,000 which represents a 13% increase over Fiscal Year 2023. One very important item of note relating to the Tri County School is the proposed \$280,000,000



new school building that is being proposed by the Tri County School Committee, which represents an expected impact to Walpole of \$1,145,000 for the next 30 years. It is expected that a district wide vote of all 11 Towns will be taken on October 24, 2023. If this vote were to pass, Walpole along with 10 other district Towns, will have some very difficult decisions to make to close the budget gap. I remain encouraged by the efforts made by Tri-County Superintendent Karen Maguire and the Tri-County School Committee to attempt to address the need for additional building funding at the State level. I look forward to working with Superintendent Maguire, the Select Board and Walpole's Legislative Delegation to address vocational school building needs throughout the state.

The recommended budget for the Walpole Public School Department stands at \$53,297,010 which is a 3.7% increase over Fiscal Year 2023. Superintendent Gough and School Business Manager Mike Friscia have assured me that the budget I am recommending for the Walpole Public Schools for FY 24 will meet the district's needs. I commend Superintendent Gough, the Walpole School Committee and all of the staff in Walpole Public Schools Administration offices for their continued commitment to educational excellence in the face of the pandemic over the last few years. It is clear the leadership in the Walpole Public Schools have a vision for the Walpole Public Schools that is focused on substantial operational and capital investments for the students in Walpole. This dedication is evident in the Walpole Public School Budget that was recently voted on by the School Committee and the Committee's hands on work with the new Middle School project and their visioning sessions for the work that is needed at the Walpole High School.

Debt Service:

The proposed Fiscal Year 2024 debt budget provides for the payment of principal and interest costs for long-and short-term bonds issued by the Town for General Fund purposes. Walpole currently has a AA+ rating. The Fiscal Year 2024 Debt budget is \$7,752,057, which is approximately \$1,089,138 higher than Fiscal Year 2023, due primarily to funding for the debt exclusion vote for the new middle school that was approved by the Walpole voters in November 2021.

Our debt level is moderate and manageable. We continue to work with Hilltop Securities, our financial advisor to ensure that the Town is capitalizing on the market when it comes to interest rates and borrowing. The Town has recently been able to realize significant savings for our taxpayers when the Select Board took immediate action after the override vote to authorize a \$70 million in borrowing, enabling the Town to take advantage of favorable interest rates for the next 30 years for the Middle School project. The Select



Board's foresight is going to have positive long-term impacts on Walpole's borrowing for years to come.

Assessment and Fringe Benefits:

The Assessment and Fringe Benefits portion of the budget which consists of the Other Post-Employment Benefits, Retirement Assessment, Net Metering, Unemployment and Insurance is budgeted at a 9% increase at this time.

The budgeted OPEB contribution is \$500,000 in FY 24. This recommendation maintains our ongoing commitment to funding the Town's OPEB liability. Since 2014 the Town has increased the OPEB account from \$1,072,538 to \$8,547,654. The Town's recent actuarial study estimated Walpole's Unfunded Actuarial Accrued Liability at just over \$62.4 million. I commend the Select Board and the Finance Committee for their continued disciplined approach to funding OPEB each year.

Reserves

A community's reserves are the bellwether of a municipality's overall financial stability and adaptability, particularly in the face of adverse economic trends or unforeseen emergencies. Reserve funds are critical implements in the municipal budgeting toolbox. They allow the Town to set money aside from the general fund for specific purposes. Not only do healthy reserve fund contributions improve municipal bond ratings, they also allow the Town to maintain stability during economic downturns.

We continue to add to our financial reserves and maintain a solid AA+ bond rating for the Town. The resources in the Town's reserves include Free Cash, the Stabilization Fund, and the Town's unassigned fund balance.

The Fiscal Year 2024 budget maintains \$450,000 in the reserve fund. This account which, falls under the jurisdiction of both the Select Board and Finance Committee will allow Town officials to address unforeseen and extraordinary shortfalls if necessary.

Undesignated fund balance, informally known as "Free Cash," was certified at \$10,764,417. The Fall Town Meeting appropriated \$8,320,005 for a variety of items. The following list breaks down the identified uses of free cash:

- Fall Town Meeting Capital Appropriations \$4,820,950
- School Appropriations \$699,055
- Fall 2022 Stabilization Appropriation \$650,000



- Fall 2022 Capital Stabilization Appropriation \$1,150,000
- Fall 2022 OPEB Appropriation \$1,000,000

\$2,444,412 of the certified Free Cash funds was not appropriated last Fall. The Finance Committee wisely made this recommendation in order to allow the Town to address any potential shortfall that may need to be addressed at the Spring 2023 Town Meeting.

Since 2014 the Town's Stabilization Fund has grown from \$1,827,245 to \$10,218,563. At the Fall 2021 Town Meeting the Town reestablished a Capital Stabilization account which currently has a balance of \$2,496,757.

Throughout my tenure as Town Administrator, I have been proud to work with the Select Board and the Finance Committee to add to the Town's reserves. These reserves provide much needed flexibility as we go out to borrow for some of the larger capital projects and if ever necessary that the day comes where the Town needs to access these reserves in order to bridge potential budget gaps. The identified reserves will continue to allow us to preserve Walpole's long-term financial stability.

Capital Investments/Infrastructure

The Capital Budget requests last Fall exceeded \$36.9 million and Town Meeting voted to fund more than \$13.1 million in requests. I commend the Capital Budget Committee for their efforts overseeing the Capital Budget requests and the Town's long-term capital planning processes. Some of the major items that received funding included:

- \$1,993,750 for improvements to the Town's Capital Infrastructure, including funding for improvements to Blackburn Hall, Elementary School STEM Labs, Phase II of the Downtown Traffic Study, design services to replace the Center and South Pools, and the resurfacing of the High School Track.
- \$2,294,200 for Capital Equipment, including police cruisers, heavy duty dump trucks, new lawn mowers, and \$600,000 for the School Department's 3-Year Technology Plan and Elementary School STEM Labs.
- \$1,524,146 for Street and Drainage Improvements, including \$781,146 from the state's Chapter 90 road improvement program.



- \$7,290,000 for investments to the Water Department infrastructure, including \$2.9 million for water main replacement and \$2.9 million for the redundant line for central storage
- \$50,000 for Sewer Department Equipment.

Water and Sewer Enterprise Funds

The Water and Sewer Enterprise funds are self-supporting accounts. The Water & Sewer budgets next fiscal year will show a combined total just over \$12 million dollars. The Fiscal Year 2024 Water Enterprise Fund budget is recommended at \$6,134,619. The current Water Retained Earnings balance is \$1,081,159. The recommended Sewer Enterprise budget is \$5,857,337. The current Sewer Retained Earnings balance is \$1,283,938.

The Sewer and Water Commissioners have worked hard over the last year to set water and sewer rates that provide a good balance to meeting the needs of the Sewer and Water Departments while also being mindful of not drastically increasing rates across the board for the rate payers.

Spring Town Meeting Warrant

At this time there are currently 31 Articles that are set to be considered. Some articles of note include:

- The Fiscal Year 2023 in year budget adjustment
- The Fiscal Year 2024 Budget
- The Fiscal Year 2024 Sewer and Water Budgets
- An article to address any snow and ice deficit that may be encountered.
- Multiple articles to fund all six union contracts that are set to expire at the end of Fiscal Year 2023.
- An article that funds Walpole Media Corp in Fiscal Year 2024.
- Multiple Zoning Bylaw amendment articles

A detailed description of the proposed warrant articles will be available on the Town's website soon.

Conclusion

This budget message and accompanying overall budget is the culmination of many hours of collaboration between Town Department Heads, School Department, Finance Committee, Select Board and all other Boards, Committees, and Commissions. Our collaborative approach to the budget process allows for the sharing of ideas and strategy;



resulting in an improved end result that best serves the needs of the community. As stated by our Nation's former leader, "a budget is more than just a series of numbers on a page; it is an embodiment of our values."

This budget addresses the diverse and varied needs of our community, while being mindful of the financial position of Walpole's taxpayers. I would like to thank all of those who have assisted in this process. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the dedication of Finance Director Jodi Cuneo, Treasurer Collector Lisa Sinkus, Town Appraiser Dennis Flis and Assistant Town Administrator Patrick Shield. I look forward to working with the Select Board, Finance Committee and School Committee as we finalize the FY 24 budget over the next few months.